Wørđ£å₮ê₱ ₩Θ

SCH>>[τρυε λ¤ᴠε walτσ],

I wish τhεŕε was something,
sommmething I could dØ,
ş0мετhιηg I could say,.....
to chānge you're color from blue

Beãutiful Pain in Lllyrical Motion
sevensevenfour0****

Loosssing every little bitttttttttttttttttttŒ
Æveryone~|~
else
is----
ugly
jfenaonncwn nuwnfnin bjebfiu nfuiwb823 bcuiaj--#Θ
jijwopifjnw‡hu3bnfjuwnfgnbsaŸ-vjлbru hnuerqeĭufbneĭurbbc.
I want τo be τHε. . . . ooonly 1
<<who knows you>>
** :

I ... I'm shedDing my skin
Shedding the vile layer
... Shedding my skin again
I'm changing my ways

Đeath before life begins.
to a foreign power,
... All ßαsεδ around a RAGgING fit... .
I project myself Ą-to the place cclosest to you

I look over åt the empty space ηεΝτ to mĘ,
A fading -jioejfncew- gliMpse of where youuu used tobe.
I cA n't fighttt the feelings of this <--->>depression,
It
beccomes the () source of all my Aggression--M¥ ☹

What Ar``re? . . . .☭
You??~

yiuhn thwaєnpnaєnpnaєnpn

Wordeater

Issue No. 110

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THE BREAKFAST WAITRESS

Erin Ecker

The morning begins,
My body is scorning,
The work place wins,
I'm up in the morning.

My body is scorning,
The smell of cigars,
I'm up in the morning,
Not traveling too far.

The smell of cigars,
A thick cloud of smoke,
Not traveling too far,
I will not go broke.

A thick cloud of smoke,
Can I take your order?
I will not go broke,
Please tip me a quarter.

Can I take your order?
Hash browns, some eggs?
Please tip me a quarter,
Please, please, I beg.

Hash browns, some eggs?
The work place wins.
Please, please, I beg.
The morning begins.

INSOMNIA

Jan Blucas

I'm an insomniac.
I don't get much sleep.
And that changes you, in some ways.
You start to listen for rhythms and patterns
in the drone of your home's York central heating system.
You start to notice that the screen of your
Turned-off television glows for an as-yet undetermined
amount of time after you turn out the light.
You start to alternate between taking comfort in
and seeking refuge from the flashing
12:00 12:00 12:00 of the unprogrammed VCR.
You start to realize that despite all this extra time,
you still cannot accomplish anything because
you are too exhausted to do anything but ponder.
You start to wonder how much more
you could accomplish if sleep could be
condensed into a few seconds of "micro-sleep."
You begin to see how easy it is to turn
"The laughter of thousands of people" into
"The slaughter of thousands of people."

SWITCH

Andrew J. Looney

I fall through the cold ice of sanity. Rationale fades. Logic ceases. Thoughts race each other in circles until I explode with nothingness and my mind collapses. I am the narcoleptic insomniac—capable of balancing on the line between the conscious and unconscious worlds. I am too exhausted to live, and yet too anxious to sleep.

A silhouette stands in the doorway of my hospital room. A dark limb brushes against the wall until it finds the switch. I am unable to blink as light pierces my eyes like the dry cut of razor blades. My body remains paralyzed as the watery image of a tall man moves towards my hospital bed. A look of sympathy catches my eye.

I am unable to distinguish who my visitors are, or whether I have seen them before. I suppose this man could be family—perhaps he's my dad, or one of my sons. I can't be sure. This man is neither familiar nor stranger to me.

His voice comforts me though I don not understand what he is saying. My understanding of speech has dissipated into the acknowledgment of a muffled noise. Words have no meaning for me now, though somehow I doubt that they've ever properly communicated my intentions. The expression of thought has never been of much importance to me until now.

My soul cries out to the man to justify my existence. My eyes lock with his and I am instantly linked to his thoughts. I know why he is here.

The man's eyes search my own for forgiveness. His look begs for my understanding as my heart fills with terror. I know that I will never see this man leave this hospital room. Release from my physical prison and the uncertainty of my continuation terrifies me. Is this the end of my wasted life? I'd give anything to delay this for just one more day in my familiar paradise.

The man breaks eye contact in order to lean over me. His hand again reaches for a switch; however, he finds this one on the back of a machine. I am overwhelmed with a sense of peace. Somewhere, a moth flies into a candle flame and dies.

AN AUTHOR IN SEARCH OF SIX CHARACTERS

Suzanne Alton

The producer must not have known what to think, standing on the stage with his flock of actors and actresses looking dumbfounded. In fact, the whole theater was dumbfounded—not the audience, as there was none, but the empty space itself. The room was embarrassed at its gigantic size and lack of understanding as to what had just happened.

The producer went to pick up the gun on the floor and put it in his satchel when the door opened yet again. A look of disgust came over his face.

"Another goddamn character! Get outta here, we don't need this anymore!"

This man who had just walked in, however, was not dressed in black and did not wear a mask like the ones who came before him. He simply looked like a man, or a nobody.

"Oh, no! You mean they've been here?" The man looked very upset when he said this. "Oh, they've been here, and I've missed them again!"

"Missed them? Look, which part are you?"

"Part?" the man questioned. "What part do I play? Why, I don't play any part—I'm not a character; I'm an author."

The producer started with, "Now don't start—"

"Sir, you don't understand—you have to help me; I've lost my characters. Without them, what am I?"

"Now we've been through this before, and I frankly—"

"Don't care?" The producer had a grave look on his face hiding a frightened one as the author changed his stance from bumbling idiot to someone who seemed very in charge.

"You mean you don't care? Now why would you, a producer, say a thing like that?" The man tossed his head back and laughed.

"Oh?" said the producer, regaining his stance. "Why should I care?"

"Because look at the kind of play you put on without me here to tell you the truth. Excuse me, but isn't tomorrow opening night? Where are your characters?"

"Don't feed me more philosophical bullshit—I know damn well who I am! I am a producer, not nobody!"

"A producer, eh? Well, tell me, Sir, how can you be a producer without any roles for your actors to play? How can you produce if there are no plays? You yourself are merely a player, for all you know!"

The lights got brighter, the room got hotter, and faint music began to play in the background. The setting was a middle-class house in Oslo, a piano in the backroom, flowers in a vase on the lid, a couch with a hat belonging to an aunt on it, and unpacked suitcases strewn on the floor.

"What are you doing?" the producer questioned shakily.

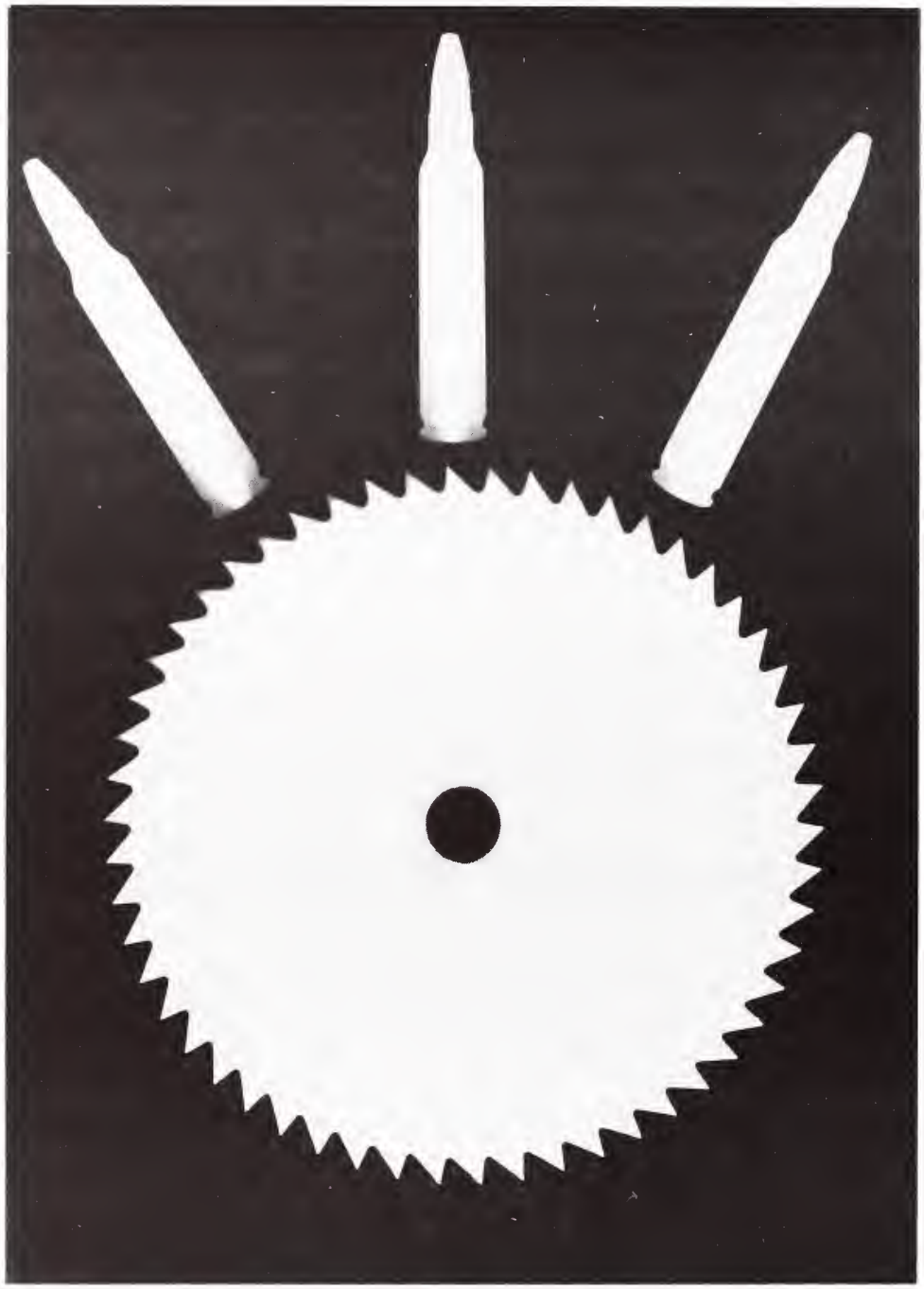
"How do you know if we are all not characters in a play? "The only way to know is to define ourselves by writing plays that we know we cannot possibly be in. One day, like our characters, we will finally find where we consistently fall."

Producer: Yes, that'll suit you, won't it, Author? "The only cock on the dung-hill—"

A shot is heard from the rear room. TESMAN, MRS. ELVESTED and AUTHOR *start from their chairs.*

ACTOR, from behind: He's shot himself! He's shot himself in the head! By Jove, fancy that! By Jove, fancy that!

LEADING LADY: But, good God! But people just don't do such things!



BEATNIK

Gina Knight

You're true to the form, you're true to the beat.
Clueless of your own identity, you
spout (generously) to me what art means.
An empty case shows the dreams of the pro.
Subway musicians... "Least they're hearin' me!"
But eloquent notes crave recognition.
Your aura is filled with complacency...
squelching the spirit of syncopation.
Taciturn businessmen stare straight ahead,
as the formless song is projected with faith.
The cool void of the tunnel loudly says
you're an artful man in an artless place.
"I'm perfectly fine stayin' comfortable!
If you're true to the form, then what the hell?"

DISTANCE

John Schroeder

The lawn wants mowing,
the furnace needs repair,
and my warm, patient wife doesn't notice
how, when thunder rolls, I stare
from the doorway at the sky.

Until, at last, she notes I'm letting in the cold.
Habit's fabric will not tear.
Woven with cords of love
and threads of care,
these bonds will hold.

But there was a time, when I was younger,
when I fed a different hunger.
Listening for silence, searching for space,
I traversed prairies and had the grace to blush
at the wind's touch on my face.

Then, I craved distance as others yearn for drink.
Called legioned stars my brothers—
Laughed with glee as endless waves fought empty shores,
and roamed cloud-wreathed mountains more freely
than you stride city streets.

But now I fix the sink.
I walk the dog and check the mail.
When evening's done, I lock the doors
and climb the stairs to hold my wife
—and seek the boon of sleep.

Each day is known, and every task repeats
with dulling, repetitious echoes
work that's gone before.
Only certainties abide;
there are no mysteries anymore.

Yet, somehow the loss does not measure to the gain.
For the wind remembers still to call my name.
And, as if it were a promise I have to keep,
still I search for geese
against the wild morning skies.

And still
(though it never ceases to surprise)
I recognize, as close-bred kin,
those men with distance
in their eyes.

SWEET MUSIC

Eric Yankee

Jacob pulled up to his favorite bar and got out of his 1978 Pinto. Lately, his life was not going so great, and he felt like he needed to get seriously drunk.

As he entered the bar, Jacob noticed that he was one of few people there tonight. The bartender was behind the counter scrubbing glasses. A young woman was sitting at a table by herself in the corner of the bar. An old man was sitting at the bar rambling to the bartender. The old man was at least seventy something, with long and stringy white hair. He was clutching a bottle of Jose Cuervo in one hand and held a cigar in the other. There was an old acoustic guitar leaning against the bar next to the man. Even though he was old, he looked as though he was not someone to mess with. Jacob sat down next to him and ordered a shot of vodka from the bartender.

"Vodka eh?" said the old man. "Drink some of this. It'll put some hair on your balls!" said the old man as he passed the bottle of Jose Cuervo to Jacob.

"No, thanks," Jacob said as he slammed his shot of vodka. The old man began to study Jacob carefully. He studied him with dark and steely brown eyes that looked as if they had seen the world. Jacob shifted uncomfortably and made sure not to meet the old man's gaze.

"What's wrong son? No, don't tell me...I think I know. Women trouble, right?" said the old man with a laugh. "I have a good sense of these things," he snorted.

"No, not women."

"Not women? When I was young, I used to have a passion for chasing women. As I grew older, I stopped."

Jacob ordered himself a Budweiser. He carefully popped the top of it off and took a swig. "Why's ya stop chasing women?" Jacob asked in between swigs.

"They started chasing me!" laughed the old man.

"Oh. Do they still chase you?" said Jacob sarcastically.

"What kind of a question is that, boy?"

"I was just wondering if you're still a lady killer in your old age."

Jacob smiled to himself and took another drink. The old man was definitely an odd one. The old man slammed his tequila bottle on the counter top. He glared at Jacob for a moment and then his mouth curved up in a sly smile.

"I know what your problem is. You don't got passion for nothing! You gotta have passion, boy!" the old man snorted at Jacob.

"What the hell are you talking about, old man?" asked Jacob.

"Passion! That's what I'm talking about!" shouted the old man.

The bartender glanced in Jacob's direction as if to say "He gets this way sometimes...pay no attention to him."

"Yes sir. All my life, I've had passion for music. It moves my soul and helps me get through my day," continued the old man. "What kind of passion do you have? he asked as he glared in Jacob's direction.

"I've always wanted to act," said Jacob as he stared at his beer.

"Always wanted to eh? Why the hell don't you just do it?" inquired the old man.

"It's pretty tough. I don't seem to have much luck getting roles," sighed Jacob.

"Tough! Ha! I worked as a professional musician for years, but it took a lot of work to get there."

"A professional musician, eh?" smiled Jacob.

"Yes, a true professional. I cared more about the music than the money. The money was good too though," said the old man as he pulled out his wallet and opened it up for Jacob to see.

Jacob looked in and noticed several hundred dollar bills. He made a mental note that the old man was insane and continued drinking his beer.

"Working as a musician is tough, but if you truly love something, you'll do it no matter how hard it may seem," said the old man with a smile on his lips. "If you really want to act, you'll do it instead of sitting here at a bar feeling bad for yourself."

Jacob was starting to get irritated by the old man. Who was this guy to tell him how to live his life? Jacob knew all about hard work for something that you loved. No matter how hard he tried though, nothing seemed to work out for him. He was ready to give up. Jacob slammed down the rest of his beer and stood up.

"I don't quite know who you think you are, old man, but you don't have a right to tell me how to live my life," said Jacob grimly.

"What do you mean? I'm not trying to tell you how to live your life. I'm just offering you some advice. Take it or leave it," the old man said.

"You're sitting here at this bar, telling me about passion. I have passion, old man. I don't need to hear about it from you," said Jacob in a low growl.

"Maybe you don't have enough of it. If you truly did, you'd take my advice. Give up everything you got now and go act. You'll be a lot better off," said the old man as he drank the remaining tequila.

"You want the worm?" smiled the old man.

"No, thanks."

"This worm is a lot like you. He wants to get out of this bottle, you just want to act. If you could both do what you wanted, you'd be happier."

"Now you're comparing me to a worm. You're out of your mind, old man," growled Jacob as he stormed out of the bar and sped away in his Pinto.

After a few minutes of silence, the old man ate the tequila worm and smiled to himself. He knew that even though he had angered the young man, at least he had told him what he needed to hear. Without true passion for what you love, you'll have a hard time trying to get anywhere in life. The old man looked over at his acoustic guitar which had been leaning against the bar. It had a well-played look to it. He picked it up and caressed each string lovingly and began to play and the sound of sweet music filled the air.

DADD [1]

Bill Yarrow

Dadd[2] was, by force of
circumstance, an artist
who lived outside the art
community. He was a
young man when he
killed his father, and
he spent the rest of his
life in confinement in
Bethlem (or Bedlam)
hospital. There, among
other things, he produced
a series of paintings on
the subject of fairies. The
most elaborate of these
is *The Fairy Feller's Master
Stroke*.[3] It is a painstakingly
detailed work that depicts a
crowd of little people, who
played such an important role
in Victorian fantasy, standing
among the towering daisies
and watching a scene whose
import must forever remain
locked in Dadd's imagination.

---

[1] Found Poem: Michael Gibson, the Symbolists, 1998, p. 70.
[2] Richard Dadd 1817-1887.
[3] On View in the Tate Gallery, Lodon.

PRIORITIES

Patty Templeton

" The sky is blue
and I love you,"

said the father 2
his suburban family,

"this wonderful world
is so grand
and
we are so very
very
happy."

AND BLAH BLAH BLAH
STOP!!!!

look around you
listen to what you R saying

EVERYTHING IS NOT OK
it is alright 2
get mad
BE ANGRY
BE PASSIONATE

Yer wife is sleeping
w/ the accountant
Yer daughter just
had an abortion
Yer son is on
ritalin
the pets have medication
that costs more than it takes
2 feed a starving child 4 a year

You live in a cubicle
prison
w/ the 50 hour work weak
plus catch up time
the weakend

don't ignore the
problems
change them
do something absurd
[not insane]

quit yer job
sell the house
that you hated
but she wanted
so you mortgaged yer soul 4

spend time w/ yer
children
[but not by watching the idiot box]

DO SOMETHING/DO ANYTHING
but
realize
your life is passing
by
w/ an awful amount
of
dead time.

are you really living at all?

JOURNAL ENTRY

Denise Waters

I had mom & dad over for dinner last night and mom told me this story:

When my grandmother was young, a candy store on 63rd and something had a fire. Candy was thrown out, and children found it in the alley. My grandmother was one of five siblings—in the middle somewhere. All five siblings ate the candy—along with twenty some-odd other children. All of the children became ill and landed in the local hospital. The candy had been contaminated with chemicals of some sort. (must have been something without aroma or taste?) Two children died as a result of the tainted candy. Both were siblings of my grandmother—how terrible. To make the situation worse, one of the children who passed died in my grandmother's bed. My grandmother had taken her little sister into her own bed to comfort her because she was crying. When my grandmother tried to wake her in the morning, she was gone. A nun had to take my grandmother away as the cold body was removed. My grandmother lost a brother that night too.

You know I can't believe that my mother didn't share this with me until now — I am forty-three years old. Tragic as the story is, if it was in my repertoire of history, I would have shared the story over and over again—until people would say "she told us this story a hundred times." Go figure.

FOR GRANDMA HELEN

Denise Waters

A treasure of the sweetest kind
found in the ruins of the charred confection shoppe
children clamoring for the treats
carelessly discarded by the shopkeeper
in the alley

Not unlike Hansel and Gretel
danger disguised in the things children dream of
one by one the children succumb
to the effects of the taint that remained
unknown

And you, one of five of the same house
share the ward with your youngest sister
whom you comfort through the night
to whom you lend your warmth
in vain

And you, one of five of the same house
must mourn not for only this one, but yet another
—a brother

And you, one of three of the same house
went on living in spite of tragic incident
until it was your time to be called home
to play

I wish the game had been postponed
and I could have grown to see if terror night
showed in what I remember as happy eyes
walking from the bus stop loaded
with bakery

Knowing each life touches others
I wonder did this impress my mother?
in some way becoming part of her and me
and mine

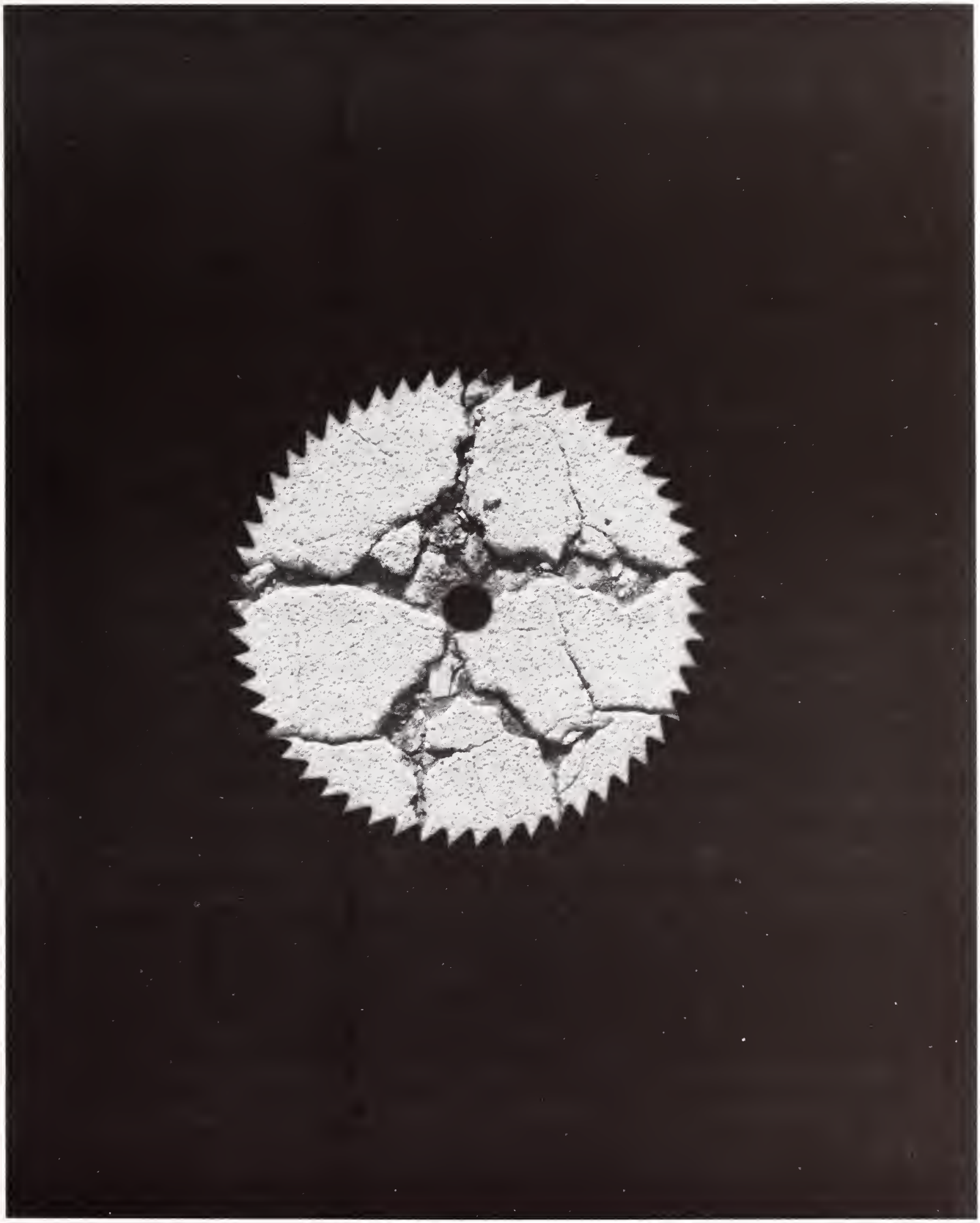
WHY DID YOU LEAVE ME?

Theresa Panzica

The frayed edges of your sweater pulled up around your ears,
the purple hat pulled down to your brows,
such a lovely face, smiling back at me,
your eyes dancing with delight
If only I had known what music mulled your mind
or what dancing demons drove you.
Why did you leave me?

I see you everywhere: at the beach, wading at the water's edge.
At Great America, I see you eating cotton candy, and I see you
at the grocery store and in our favorite restaurant.
I see you in the moon and at the first light of dawn.
I see you in traffic. I see you lying on the sofa
I see you sleeping, your sweater pulled up to your eyes.
Oh, why did you leave me?

The laundry's piled up, the kids are crying,
the sweater still hangs on the hook behind the door,
Spillage in the fridge still colors the shelf
—and I don't know why you left me.



THIS IS WHAT IT IS LIKE

Kantilius Noldstun

This is what it is like. And this is what it is like to celebrate your 21st birthday by getting drunk and hitting on a lesbian that not surprisingly rejects you. And this is what it is like to quit your cushy job and go to school. And this is what it is like to have read all but five things of thirty or forty you will be reading in the next semester. And this is what it is like to walk to school in the snow. And this is what it is like to be reading *The Hotel New Hampshire* in your car before class. And this is what it is like to dance with a skeleton at a bar. And this is what it is like to want to have sex with her anyway. And this is what it is like to acquire a quarter of high quality pot despite your severe nervousness about buying pot. And this is what it is like to smoke it in three days in your apartment along with a carton of cigarettes. And this is what it is like to stop going to school. And this is what it is like to lie on a couch for three months. And this is what it is like to acquire an ounce of high quality pot despite nervousness. And this is what it is like to smoke it in six days. And this is what it's like to get off the couch finally. And this is what it is like to drive to California on "spring break." And this is what it is like to do it in a car that is 9,000 miles past the time you should have changed your oil. And this is what it is like to see Ferlinghetti. And this is what it is like to turn around and drive to Illinois in a car that is 11,000 miles past the time you should have changed your oil. And this is what it is like to get back to your apartment and lie back down on the couch. And this is what it is like to try acid for the first time and see a halo around Bob Dylan's head. And this is what it is like to be afraid to drop your classes. And this is what it is like to go see an old teacher friend and have him convince you to see a shrink. And this is what it is like to try and convince the shrink

that you don't want to kill yourself. And this is what it is like to get him to write you a medical excuse so your academic career isn't destroyed. And this is what it is like to come home and tell your parents things went pretty well at school. And this is what it is like to start reading again. And this is what it is like to start writing again. And this is what it is like to stop smoking pot. And this is what it is like to start smoking pot again. And this is what it is like to stop smoking pot. And this is what it is like after two years absence to meet, over coffee, your old friend who became an alcoholic. And this is what it is like to see hope in his eyes. And this is what it is like for him to teach you how to pick yourself up. And this is what it is like for you to fall again. And this is what it is like to talk about Kant with him. And this is what it is like to think about checking yourself into a nut house. And this is what it is like to decide to go to school instead. And this is what it is like to walk around a new campus and be hopeful. And this is what it is like to throw up on yourself while driving there to move in. And this is what it is like while sitting on the steps smoking cigarettes your first night there to talk to a girl who has tried to kill herself six times. And this is what it is like to try to seduce her. And this is what it is like to have read everything for all your classes before classes start. And this is what it is like to pick up *I, Claudius* and read it before class starts. And this is what it is like to finally meet your roommate. And this is what it is like for him to be an albino anarchist who likes amphetamines. And this is what it is like to go to class and say almost nothing. And this is what it is like to say one brilliant thing a week. And this is what it is like to be afraid of French class. And this is what it is like to acquire Paxil from your new shrink. And this is what it is like when it makes you horribly tired. And this is what it is like when it lets you masturbate for two hours at a time. And this is what it is like to not be able to shower for two months because you're horribly afraid to shower in public. And this is what it is like to walk by

someone else's T.V. set after just getting up and hear that a plane has crashed. And this is what it is like to think, "Yeah, that'll happen." And this is what it is like to rush into a room for fear of being late and have the teacher say, "This is a very tragic day." And this is what it is like to find out that three planes crashed. And this is what it is like to find out that two of them brought down the World Trade Center Towers. And this is what it is like to want to cry and not be able too. And this is what it is like to have your albino anarchist friend stay true to form and say he regretted the loss of life but agreed in general with the sentiment. And this is what it is like to go to the albino anarchist's hometown. And this is what it is like to smoke pot again. And this is what it is like to have the albino anarchist's friends keep the cops from coming in. And this is what it is like to start lying on a couch again. And this is what it is like to call the alcoholic and explain the situation. And this is what it is like to have him offer to let you move in with him. And this is what it is like to start driving toward Newton, Iowa, because he had to rescind his offer. And this is what it is like to declare you are going to finish your novel and then kill yourself. And this is what it is like to go back to school because you are afraid. And this is what it is like to have the alcoholic love you. And this is what it is like to walk around campus alone. And this is what it is like for the alcoholic to renew his offer. And this is what it is like to have your car's light on for a week and your battery not work. And this is what it is like for you to pick up the results of your I.Q. test on your way up the stairs to get someone to help you jump-start your car. And this is what it is like to have the test tell you, "You couldn't possibly be stupid because you have an I.Q. of 175." And this is what it is like to arrive at the alcoholic's house and have his mom hug you. And this is what it is like to hold hands and say grace to a god you don't believe in. And this is what it is like to start reading again. And this is what it is like to start writing again. And this is what it is like to

watch the alcoholic fall in love. And this is what it is like to watch him go to Milwaukee every weekend. And this is what it is like to become very unsocial. And this is what it is like to feel uncomfortable in a house that doesn't have the alcoholic in it. And this is what it is like to have Christmas with a family you really don't like. And this is what it is like to sign up for classes at J.J.C. And this is what it is like to be thrown out of the alcoholic's house very kindly for being unsocial. And this is what it is like to be home again. And this is what it is like to go to class again. And this is what it is like to have read almost nothing you will be reading this semester. And this is what it is like to see an old teacher friend again. And this is what it is like to continue reading and writing. And this is what it is like to place an ad in the personals. And this is what it is like to not so slowly fall in love. And this is what it is like to watch her cry after giving head because she had been sexually abused and was afraid and you didn't know about it. And this is what it is like to hold her and comfort her. And this is what it is like to stop going to class because you're in love and not because you're depressed. And this is what it is like to feel guilty about it. And this is what it is like to start going to the library and reading instead of going to class. And this is what it is like to be afraid of dying everyday because you are driving on a slightly bent wheel. And this is what it is like to be more afraid of getting it fixed because you are incredibly unsocial. And this is what it is like to hear that the alcoholic is getting married. And this is what it is like to hear that your mother is going to kill herself. And this is what it is like to not be smoking pot. And this is what it is like to try and get into a charity organization to prove that you actually do have a good heart. And this is what it is like to have someone to say "I love you" too. And this is what it is like.

I REMEMBER

Katrina Deutsche

I was only 12 years old. There you lay in the
middle of the floor. In between the kitchen and the
dining room. You were dressed in your usual
house dress. Blue and pink plaid. You had
just come from the doctor's office, not 7 hours
before. The two of you, always ate dinner at 5:00.
And you were just cleaning up the mess.

I had finished my dinner. My parents were still
eating, sitting at the kitchen table on that cold
January evening. I remember I was playing with
my dolls. I had piano lessons at 7:00. I remember
The sound of the phone ringing. I was the first to the
phone, so of course I answered it. Hello. It was not you
on the other end. If was my grandfather. Come quick,
you're grandma has fallen.
And he hung up.

I went into the kitchen and told my parents. We rushed
out of the door. In my haste, I forgot my doll. How lost
I was without her. She should have been there to comfort
me, someplace to hide my head so I didn't have to look at you.
But I forgot her.

We were at your house in 2 minutes. You had always lived on
the farm with us. You lived on the farm before I did. You were
the farm. We rushed in. I had to step over you. I had to. I had
to get to the other side, so I didn't have to look at your blue
purple lips. Or smell the wonderful perfume that I had bought you not
two weeks before for Christmas. How you always wanted that
perfume, but you would never buy it for yourself. Now there was
no time to enjoy it. I could nearly sense how cold and
clammy your skin must be.
But I wouldn't touch.

There was no place to go to get away from it. I went into
the living room, turned on the TV. But there was
nothing that could drown out the voices. Where was
my doll? God, how I needed her. Why didn't I bring
her? I could hear them talking. They had to call the
paramedics. They had to call my uncle, your other son.
He came too.

The paramedic was my best friend's mom. But there was no time to talk.
I remember them cutting off your plaid dress,
trying to revive you. The oxygen. Oh, how I remember. They
rolled you away, but you were breathing.
At least then you were.

It was 10:00 at night by the time my dad got back home. I never
did make it to my piano lesson. But at least I had my doll now.
It was not good news. They had revived you several times,
but in the end, they just couldn't anymore.
You were dead.

Why couldn't the doctor have saved you? You were just
there. He should have known. It seems so ironic.
Your heart was the best part of you. So kind and loving
always there for your grand-kids, and your sons whenever
they needed you. But in the end, it was your heart that gave out.
How Ironic.

UNTITLED

Amy Outland

It's seven a.m. on a Monday morning in late November. It is chilly and raining in Boston this morning. *The Chef's Kitchen*, the local diner where I work waiting tables, is quiet, but I know that won't last too long. The breakfast rush usually starts at about half past seven and finishes just in time for the lunch crowd to come in around noon. I sit at the Formica counter enjoying the silence and resting my feet before the day begins. This job, although it is simple, can be downright exhausting. But before I go on, maybe I should tell you a little about this place since I spend most of my time here. It's nothing special really. Red plastic booths form a line by the window. There's a counter with stools on both sides. The kitchen's in the back and there's a jukebox in the corner. The floor is a black and white checkerboard pattern. Like I said, it's your typical diner. As I sit here at the counter waiting for the bell above the door to ring, signaling the entrance of the day's first customer, listening to Patsy Cline's "She's Got You" playing on the jukebox, I start thinking. Of course, this is nothing new. I'm always thinking about something. Sometimes it's about the car crash that killed both of my parents when I was nine; sometimes it's about whether or not I'll ever get to go to art school. But that's just the way I am. I can picture myself standing up in one of those support groups and saying, "Hello, my name is Julia and I'm a thinker." It's silly I know, but I often wonder whether I think too much for a girl of nineteen. It's a quarter after seven and I'm getting restless, so I reach down under the counter and pull out the small brown leather backpack that goes with me wherever I go. Inside I keep a sketchpad and a few pencils along with my wallet and some odds and ends of little things. I open the pad to a blank page and start drawing. At first, I have no idea

what I am drawing, but soon I realize that it is a picture of one of the other waitresses walking around the diner putting ketchup bottles and newly filled salt and pepper shakers on her tables. I have already done mine, so that's why I can sit and sketch her right now. The pen in my hand is practically guiding itself as I watch this girl. She's new on the job, I think, because I've never seen her before and I've worked here for almost a year. Imagine a year of my life wasted working in a diner all in the name of formal education. Actually, it's in the name of art. I wouldn't ask for anything else my entire life if just one of my paintings could be hanging in a museum or on the cover of a magazine. I've always wanted everyday people to see my artwork because they are my inspiration. I put the finishing touches on the sketch and admire it. I'm happy with the drawing. I leave it on the counter for the customers to see. At seven twenty, I pour myself a cup of coffee and listen to the cook firing up the griddle. The song on the jukebox has started over. Someone must really like it, but I feel like changing the song. I walk over to the jukebox and reach into my apron pocket for the change that's always there. I push a few buttons and suddenly the mellow sound of Tori Amos playing piano fills the tiny room.

"Never was a cornflake girl. Thought it was a good solution hanging with the raisin girls. She's gone to the other side, given us a yo heave ho..."

The lyrics fade out interrupted by the ringing of the bell above the door. I straighten my skirt and stand behind the counter. I hold out a menu but he shows no interest. He sits down at the counter at the same spot where I left my drawing. I can hear the lyrics but only faintly now because I'm smiling and trying another tack. "Coffee? I ask,

lifting the pot slightly in my right hand, almost unconsciously. This time the man nods in the affirmative. I reach for a trademark white ceramic cup and balance it on a saucer and slide it across the counter to the man who has still not spoken. I have just finished pouring the coffee when the man jerks his arm out to his side to remove his flannel shirt. It happens in slow motion and I supress the urge to gasp as I watch the heavy brown liquid spreading over the fresh black ink of my drawing. The cup and saucer crash to the floor. The man curses under his breath, and suddenly I can make out the words to the song again.

"Things are getting kind of gross and I go at sleepy time. This is not really happening. You bet your life it is."

It feels as if the lyrics were written to coincide with this exact moment in time.

"This is not really happening," I tell myself as my creation drowns.

A voice sings in my head. "You bet your life it is." The man doesn't seem to notice as I pick up the shards of broken glass. The waitress brings out a dust pan and steps carefully around them. The drawing is still on the counter, transparent now. The image is gone. I hold it in my hands for a brief moment. A piece like this won't get me into art school. I pick up the paper in one sweeping motion and it lands in the trash. I stare at the counter and try to conceal the pain in my emerald green eyes. I push back the strand of blonde hair that has come loose from my French braid. I won't be going to art school today. It's just another Monday morning in a Boston diner. I glance at the clock and exhale. Seven thirty: the morning rush has begun.

"More coffee sir?" I ask the man. He nods as though nothing has happened.

911

Denise Waters

Sometime in the morning
I gotta phone call
and he says
are you watchin the television
no
the kids are watchin Barney
why?
some planes crashed into buildings
in New York
on purpose
gotta go
snuck the alarm radio
into the kitchen
and listened as
buildings
collapsed
served up snacks
to oblivious kids
went outside to play
Canada Geese squawked
sky was blue
too blue
somethin was missin
no geometric designs left behind
by passin planes
no distant hmmm
of metal birds goin somewhere
It was surreal.

THE MEXICAN OPALS

Suzanne Alton

"So, Suzanne, what do you think of Tom, honey?" Veronica asks me.

In reality, I am not thinking of Tom at all—I am too busy staring at my shoes. They are sandals of chocolate colored leather with wide Velcro straps and have a tall heel so I look a little taller. To think that I am wearing these sandals that have been in my closet and almost forgotten since last September is shocking to me, considering it is only February; it means so much to me to wear them again.

"Oh, I think he's nice enough and cute enough and kind, although I don't know how thoughtful he is yet," I reply, listening to my own voice but not paying attention.

Veronica is a friend of mine, but we didn't actually meet that long ago. In fact, she didn't actually realize that I am three years younger than she is until she saw my passport two nights ago. We are in Mexico with her lover, Ryan, and his friend Tom, who had been a complete stranger to me before yesterday night. I am not romantic, even if I am in one of the most beautiful landscapes in the world. At least, to me Puerto Vallarta is one of the most beautiful, but I guess I haven't really traveled much and wouldn't know any better. It occurs to me that in a sense all of the people I am on vacation with on this lovely February day are just as strange as Tom is to me, so I have nothing to lose.

"Okay? Just okay? After last night?" she questions with an exaggerated upset in her squeaky, high-pitched voice. I stop then thinking of my shoes and begin to think of my past flame who shares the same name as this new young man. Tom the Stranger is a tall and average young man who talks a little fast and has ash brown hair. He graduated from a state school about four years ago and works in the city and visits his "brudder" too much, and it shows. He does not look to be downtown, yet he looks like he does not stand out and would be a nice person to sit next to on the train and forget exists. But he is nice and cute and kind, but what I really want is someone who is filled with thoughts—thoughtful. And I don't have the heart to admit to either

Veronica or myself that I really want him to have brown eyes, like my old friend Tom.

I look up from my brown shoes and pull my hat towards my face as I raise my head to the landscape around me. We are standing on the sidewalk of the Marina, and the trees have beautiful magenta flowers with huge petals, and I imagine they must've come straight from the Garden of Eden. The sky seems to be boundless, unlike the sky I never notice while I am hidden under the branches at home. Or is it like staring at a gray prison wall, hardly any point looking in the first place?

"So, are you two going to come hang out with us tonight, or are you going out alone?"

"Let's go in this jewelry shop." I avoid Veronica, and although she is already weighed down by sterling with green jewels on her ears, fingers, and throat, she still agrees to go in with me. I head to the same section I always go to in every jewelry store, whether in the city or halfway around the world—the opals.

As we step inside the little shop, the lights are a little dimmer and the air a little cooler, and it feels good against my aggravated, sunburned skin. The place is one big circle, with tables covered with sterling bangles, bracelets, barrettes, rings, anklets, and necklaces and pendants of different shapes and sizes, but they are still all basically the same thing. Every store in Mexico sells the same styles of jewelry except for a few slight variations, and—of course—different prices.

The tables are covered with velvet, and the pieces are displayed in patterns of Aztec and Mexican blocks and labyrinths that decorate the actual silver. My eyes trace and follow the rows and rows of silver—I am not as interested in the jewelry as I am in the patterns themselves. It seems to me like I'd have to own all of the pieces and display them in this way on a table to actually derive any pleasure from them at all.

I did not notice it before, but Ryan and Tom are standing by Veronica, and she is talking in her high-pitched voice again.

"Oh, Ryan, you got ripped off at the last place! See—this one is the exact same bracelet, only it's fifty pesos cheaper!"

"Veronica, I am never buying you another piece of jewelry again!" Ryan yells, and he says more, but I am lost in the sterling now. My eyes look at how the pieces all

shine at the exact same curves and link together, and just when I am getting bored, I see it.

"Oh, Veronica, take a look at this one!" I shout almost too excitedly. She walks away while Ryan is looking at her and sees. It is a bracelet make with eight opals. I count them in my head—one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight. Eight, yes, eight. Some are of a purple hue, and others are a little orange, and others are pink, but a few of them are blue. They are Mexican opals, and they are nothing like the ones I have at home.

"Oh, hey, that one's nice," she says in a rather unexcited voice, preparing to walk back over to Ryan.

"I don't know—it seems too vain to spend all of that money on myself," I say out loud for no one in particular to hear, but mainly Tom.

I have been collecting and receiving opals since about the time I hit puberty. I had heard the name opal and really liked it even before I knew what an opal looked like. Opal, opal, like something you would find in a church, a piece of some ritual ceremony. Maybe a type of bread, or a pillow you'd carry a ring on, or the actual ring itself, or a special kind of perfume. But no. One day in a Carson's, I saw an opal. I didn't know how to feel, but I decided to like them and grew to collect many, although they are fragile and crack and I can't wear many of them anymore. In fact, I am looking at the setting of the little opals and wonder how durable this setting will be. But then it doesn't bother me—the opals can always be reset.

Ryan jerks his head in the direction of the door, and I know it's time to leave. I walk past all other sterling pieces and do not see patterns anymore. All I can seem to focus on is the opal bracelet and the colors and swirls inside the stones.

Later that night, we go downtown and Tom buys me many drinks, but not enough to get my sloppy enough to need his help back to the hotel, so I fake it. He carries me out of the cab and up to our room. And in the morning, I look at his eyes, the ones that are a vivid blue and supposed to be brown, and I decide they are no longer like the sky, the Pacific Ocean, or a naval uniform, but they are indeed Mexican opals. They are a vivid blue with gold swirls around the pupil, and he must find it awfully romantic that I gaze into them so attentively.

"C'mon, hon," he casually and bossily tells me, "let's go downstairs." We get up.

Later that day back at the marina, Veronica mentions to me that Tom and I are doing so well that I should look into seeing him again. I am still thinking about the opals. Four hundred and eighty pesos is a lot of money to spend on oneself, that's for sure. But the swirls stand out in my mind, and those colors are just so exquisite. I ask Veronica to let me look at her bracelet.

"Suz, you should have Tom buy the bracelet for you!" she squeals. My eyes brighten.

"Oh, Veronica, that's too much to ask, I think," I say, suddenly shy.

"Suz, he likes you and wants to see you again. He told Ryan. It would be so romantic to say you started dating him in Mexico and he got you something."

Yes, it would, I think. Tom. It's about time something in my life started to change. And this one has the money the other one doesn't make.

That evening the boys go to the bank, and Veronica and I get ready together. I am wearing a beautiful Cinderella blue ruffled silk blouse and white Capri pants. I know I look pretty.

"So, do you want me to drop a hint to him that you'd like the bracelet?" my friend asks me.

I pout at my lipsticked reflection and say, "Well, if you want to."

"Suz, I think it'd be great for the two of you to get together, and it's not like he doesn't have the money." Now her voice takes a faraway tone as she curls her lashes and loses herself in the process.

"Yes, tell him," I say dreamily. But it never happens.

Tom walks in and is as proud of me as I am, but the problem is that they stopped for cheap Mexican beer after the bank, and at dinner he starts downing vodka tonics. This is our last night in Puerto Vallarta, and he promised me last night we'd stay up late and spend it together. I take him upstairs to the room and put him to bed alone.

I do not know if I really like opals as much as I used to, I think. Then I think I am being silly. I had a regular opal, mainly white with green, at home, and everyone used to tell me how beautiful it was. But Tom at home never noticed, and that is when I really began to doubt them. I go to sit out on the deck.

As I open the glass doors and step onto the deck, I feel like I'm in a huge birdcage with all the barred decks holding back exotic creatures who chat and sing a strange and beautiful language. But I'm still in a cage, I suddenly think. But I'm still in a cage, and it depresses me. And it's not like you can honestly get in a boat and sail. And I realize that I will never be a strange and exotic bird; I am instead bargaining and compromising myself like a piece of jewelry or brown glass in one of the cramped little stores.

Both Toms appear to be thousands of miles away, and this illness of mine can't stand to sleep in the same bed with him. I take one last look down the balcony and instinctually think of jumping. Tom mentioned to me before that one of the last girls he dated tried to kill herself and I can see why. He is kind and sweet and cute, but he is not thoughtful. He is a pattern of waking up, going to the marina, going downtown, and going to sleep. I find myself wanting to promise him nothing, yet I want to tell him everything, or is it the other way around? My head is swirly suddenly, and I decide to go to bed.

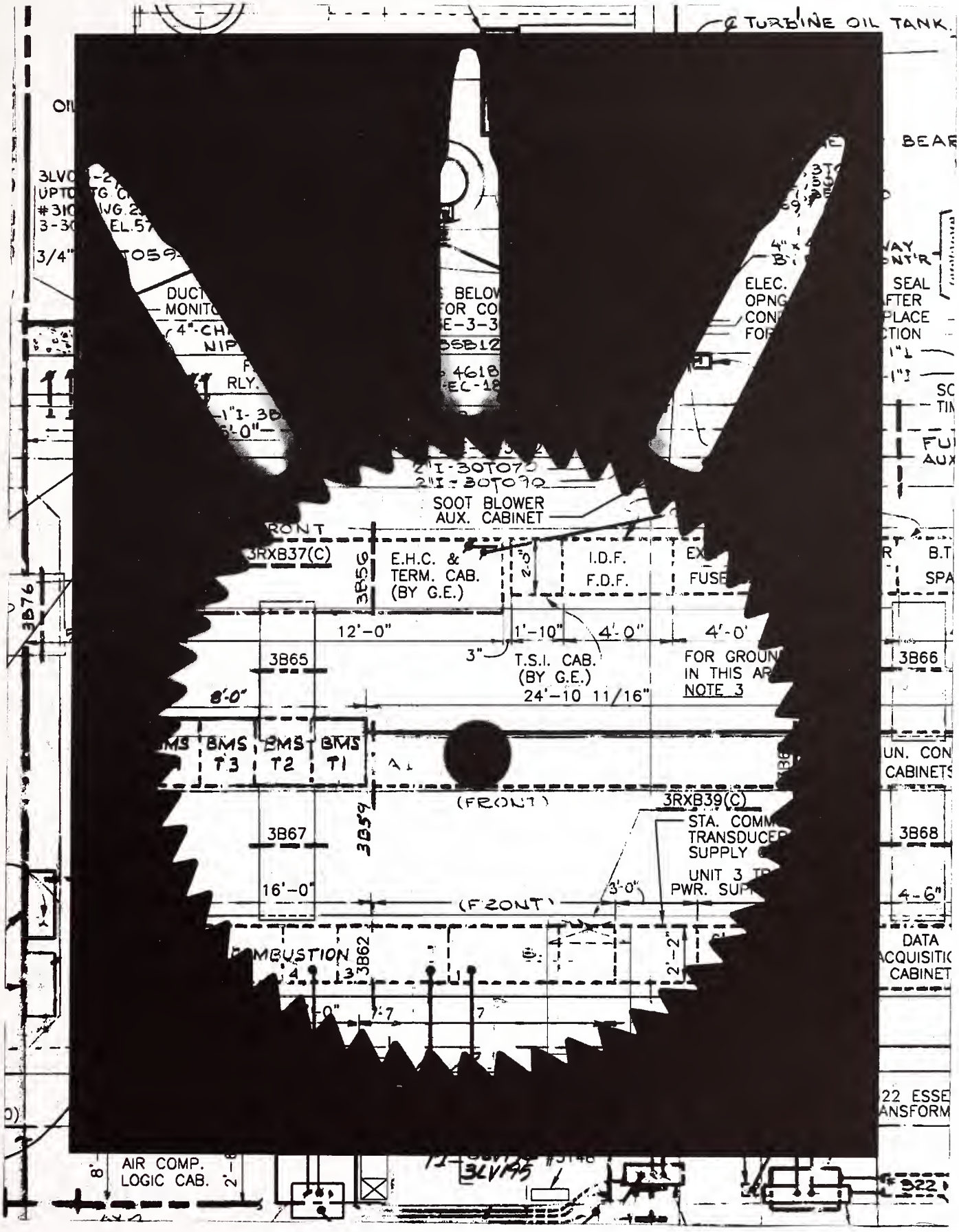
On our last afternoon, we go back inside the jewelry shop with the opals while the boys wait outside.

"How much?" I ask.

"Four-hundred and eighty pesos," a dark man replies in an accent as thick as he is.

"I'll take it for forty U.S." I say.

"You have gotten yourself a bracelet," he tells me. Veronica calls to me—it is time to go. I think of Thomas, thousands of miles away, and then I put the opals on with shaky hands and walk swiftly out the door.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THE SHINY PENNY

Berta Arias

Driving hurriedly to catch a plane on this rainy winter afernoon, I reach into the cup holder on my right, fingers searching for the correct forty-cent change in order to avoid the anticipated back up at the toll booth area ahead.

I manage to dig out two quarters. Carefully cupping one of them in my left driving hand, my right hand again goes fishing for change, this time more frantically as the toll area appears in the distance, traffic a mile long in the change booths. All right! I have picked up a couple of pennies, and I feel I'm almost there. All my fingers have to do now is recall the tactile memory of a penny. No, that feels like a dime. And that...I don't know, but it's too large. Yes, now that's it! I drag out one, two, three pennies just as I reach the point of no return at the toll and must choose between the dead-stopped change booth traffic or the exact change lanes.

I look at my hand just to make sure I actually do have the exact change necessary, and as I verify my cache, my eye catches a glimpse of the shiny penny. For a second, my impulse is to keep it, to search in the drink cup for another old and tarnished one. But that's not possible at this point in my drive. I am at the exact change toll basket so I cast my coins in the air with the confident and expert throw of a frequent toll booth user. Unconsciously, I sigh with relief as the road opens up in front of me once more. Still, I feel a tinge of disappointment because I have lost the shiny penny.

The shiny penny.

Funny how such an insignificant object causes a visceral change in me. Slowly I relax into my car seat and hurrying to a plane is suddenly not as important as it was just a short while ago. My mind drifts across miles and decades to a long-ago late summer afternoon.

I see my father kneeling next to me, checking the front of each of the brown loafers to make absolutely sure that there is enough growing room for my eight year old feet. After all, this is a purchase for the school year, and hopefully the shoes will keep up with growth spurts.

The loafers are not pretty to me, perhaps because I've never had any before. *My* shoes brought carefully packed from Havana are pretty. They are white or pink, with little flat heels, not the clunky thick ones I now stand on. *My* shoes have little straps across the front, not the thick leather tongue that now covers half of my foot. I wear *my* shoes with white, lacy stockings, not the thick cotton socks that the shoe salesman has handed my father.

"No me gustan."

I'm sure my dad is not happy to hear that I don't like the new American footwear. "Well, they're very pretty. Very pretty on you. And it's what all the children wear here in America to go to school."

His logic doesn't convince me.

"No me gustan."

I remember the look on my father's face. Was it his disappointment that I wasn't as anxious as he to adopt this American custon or was he suddenly saddened that we had left behind a life requiring less practical shoes?

"No. No me gustan."

My father looked at me for a while, and then his expression changed. With a smile, he explained.

"Ahhh. But you'll like this." His hand went into his pocket and remained there. We looked at each other for a moment while my father continued to smile, teasingly not taking anything out of his pocket. I forgot about the ugly loafers, intent on my father's surprise.

"Well, what is it?"

"Ahhh. It's something that can only go with these shoes, only with loafers. And it's very special. It brings good luck."

He slowly drew his hand out of his pocket, and opening his clenched fist, showed me the shiniest copper penny I had ever seen.

"And it's not an ordinary penny. See, it was made for this coming year—1959. That's why it's so shiny. And that's why it brings good luck. And I have another one. One for each of your new shoes."

Fascinated, confident that the shiny pennies were minted experslsy for me, I watched my fatrher almost reverently fit the pennies into the slot on the tongue of each shoe. My loafers were transformed. The shoes were no longer ugly, and I felt special and lucky. I loved my new American loafers!

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The load honk of a car cutting in front of me brings me back to the present, and I realize that I have almost missed the exit to the airport. I'd like to keep on daydreaming, but instead I concentrate on my driving. Only after parking and checking in at the gate do I allow myself to again savor my memory of the shiny penny a little longer, to hold my father close to my heart and mind, to remember how he could make any moment special.

I go over the entire episode, hoping to remember more of what happened, but I cannot expand the edges of my recollection. I start asking myself quesitons about that day, hoping answers will rise to the surface from some deep childhood recess.

Did the shoes last me the whole school year? Did I experience many lucky moments wearing them? When I outgrew this pair, did I transfer the pennies to other loafers? When did I lose track of the shiny, lucky pennies? Did my father and I go out for ice cream after our shopping? Where was my mother that day? Was I wearing the lucky loafers the day my parents heard that Batista had fled our island and a bearded guerrillero named Fidel had marched into the capital?

No answers rose from the subconscious depth. The memory was set, and all I could do was to replay it, like a favorite CD, repetitively beautiful and unchanged.

Maybe one day my daughter will have the equivalent 'shiny penny' moment when she looks at a brightly colored skirt. Many years from now, perhaps when she herself is a mother, the silky texture and bright pinks and reads of some fabric will fly her back to a night that she and I spent looking for the right outfit for her engagement party. It might remind her of our conversation over dinner, of her desire for the two families to like each other, of her hope to remain close to us but develop with her future husband as a couple, of her need for the perfect party outfit so that, just in case the night goes to hell in a basket, she will still feel fine.

I hope she remembers how this mission, the search for the perfect outfit, became the backdrop to a beautiful evening of closeness and shared dream for her happiness. I hope she forgets my 'long day at work' face and remembers only my exhiliration at being asked to spend time with her, my soon-to-be-married daughter. I hope she remembers our laughter as we both tried on outfits that looked beautiful on hangers but God awful on us.

Remember the tank top with the beaded heart that turned into a smile on my chest? Or the skirt that bulged on the sides (not us, of course!). Or the frilly black blouse you said made you feel like a fairy? And isn't it hard to believe that after hours on our mission, with stores beginning to close, that we still had no ourfit to boast about?

Classically, however, the last stop in the young women's department of the first store we had visited and scorned turned out to be the jackpot. You found not one but two perfect and perfectly fitting skirts. And you knew exactly what blouse at home would bring the whole look together into the dreamed ensemble. Yes,this was the 'I'll feel great even if our families hate each other' outfit that you had been searching for to wear the following week at your engagement party. What a relief!

You couldn't wait to get home and call *him* to tell him you now were ready for the party and knew everything would be perfect that day. I couldn't wait to get home to get out of my day-worn clothes and into bed.

Yes. Maybe one day my daughter will remember our evening together with all the fine details and many hours of constant chatter and sharing.

Or maybe one day, a brightly colored fabric will simply wrap her in the warm if fuzzy memory of my love enveloping and supporting her on a cold winter evening in a deserted mall when she was still my little girl.

LITTLE GREEN WORMS

Christina Dedin

I sat alone on an old bus stop bench with peeling green paint, patiently waiting for the bus. The thriving city was full of life all around me. I appeared to be the only soul in the city that was not in a mad rush. I often wonder why I moved into this chaos. Restless citizens scurried on the decorative sidewalks, their hungry eyes gazing into the large windows displays at all of the magnificent shops. All of the restaurants in my view were swarming with families and friends, eager to enjoy life. It was the beginning of another Saturday night in the city. The late summer sky was glowing with orange and amber clouds, and I felt an extremely welcome chill in the air. As I waited for the crowded bus, I could not help but dream about the vast country, where the fields are breathtaking and endless, and there are more apple trees than people.

When I moved out of the country, I was barely twenty and bored to death with the simple life. I lived in the smallest of small town America, or, at least, what seemed to me to be the smallest town while I was growing up. My best friend lived across the street, my teacher lived down the street, and my principal lived the next street over. Everyone knew everyone, and everyone knew you better than you knew yourself. I have been away at school, living this crazy city for life for almost two years now, and it has changed me immensely.

As the bus pulled up to the bus stop, the brakes let out a terrible screech, and dark smoke poured out of the tailpipe, just as winter smoke crawls out of a large, brick chimney. As I boarded the crowded bus, I was not very surprised to find that there were no available seats. Saturdays were terrible nights to ride the bus. Actually, any night was a terrible night for a city bus ride. For a second, I wished I had a car, but then I remembered what a pain it was to have a car in the city. It was so expensive just to park the car! I laughed thinking about the small gravel parking lot at my high school. The high school parking lot did not even have yellow parking lines. Students just created their own parking spots. Some were larger than others were, and some students even parked in the grass.

I struggled past the African women speaking in a foreign tongue, past the Puerto Rican couple having a serious debate in Spanish, past the Chinese business man arguing with another party on his cell phone, to stand next to an Italian woman carrying

a large package from a high class department store, and a bouquet of red roses. The Italian woman gave me goosebumps. The city was so diverse; there is variety everywhere.

Usually you do not have to stand long on the city bus because there are always people getting off and on, and eventually a seat will open up. In fact, the driver does not even wait for you to find a spot to sit down, or, in my case that night, to hang on for dear life. The drivers just like to stop and go, stop and go. Passengers nervously deposit their money into the little silver box, and the driver lifts his foot from the brake pedal to the gas pedal, and robotically opens and closes the door.

On this Saturday night, my bus stop seemed to be miles and miles away. My patience, which is usually strong and long lasting, was beginning to crumble. Seats on the bus did open, and suddenly I was sitting by the window, looking at the sunset over the city. The skyscrapers were tall, and stretched out towards the crisp, clean night sky. The lights of the city and the cars sparkled and illuminated the surrounding environment.

As I looked out the window, I wondered if I had ever ridden on the bus with any of these people before. I must have crossed paths with someone one time. I would have remembered the Italian woman with the roses if I had seen her before. She had angelic eyes, and seemed to have a magical radiance emanating from her. I wonder if the roses were a gift to her, or maybe a gift for another? Maybe she was bringing them home to her mother, or grandmother. At that moment, I turned my eyes towards her, and immediately she glanced back at me. How did she know I was looking at her? I quickly turned away and decided to scope out the pedestrians on the city sidewalks. Everyone seemed to be enjoying the beginning of another crazy night in the city.

The city almost looked attractive to me, but my bus stop was the thing that I was anticipating the most. I was going to get on with another aspect of my life. I was heading to the airport, to fly home, and to live the country life again. A picture of apple trees surfaced in my head while the bus came to yet another stop. I quickly realized this was the Italian woman's spot as, from the corner of my eye, I saw her rise. As she passed me, she handed me her red roses, told me to have fun at home, and warned me to watch out for little green worms in the apples.

THE DEPARTURE

Theresa Ann Panzica

It was a beautiful day. The sun was warm after light rain that washed the countryside. A few wispy clouds danced across the pale sky as flighty as a dancer in a mirrored ballroom. A more beautiful day could not be had for the asking. I sat just outside the barn, and watched my cat Harriet lap the warm milk from the pan. I was twelve and my sister Mary Kate was sixteen. We were the only girls born of the marriage of Pat and Margaret Murray, but we had three brothers, Tom, Pat and Michael. We lived on a small farm in county Roscommon in Ireland. This was to be the worst day of my life.

I walked to the window of the house to see what was keeping my sister when I overheard the conversation.

"Ah, Maggie, the garl will be fine"

"And how can you say that, Pat Murray? How do you know she'll ever get to America? 'Tis a long way for a garl, traveling alone."

"Oh, for Heaven's sake, didn't her brothers go before her? Haven't I been across five times already me self?"

Ah, yes, 'tis true they're gone. Me two big bys gone to America and only the Good Lord knows if I'll ever see me kiddies again. And now, as sure as God made little green apples, 'tis the garls'll be leaving."

"Ah, woman, you know there's no work here fit for man or woman and the streets of America are paved with gold. Why, a garl as sweet as Mary Kate will be working in no time and won't she be sending the money back here to help with the farm?"

I just listened, appalled at the prospect that my wonderful big sister Mary Kate was to go off to America leaving me and my little brother Mickey in Ireland.

Surely, she didn't want to leave our home, nor our mother, nor Ireland itself. Especially she did not want to leave me. Unable to contain myself any longer, I burst into the room where my parents talked and my sister busied herself with the dishes.

"Oh Ma, what do you mean? Where is Mary Kate off to? Please, don't let her go"

"Ah garl, hush yourself. This is a talk between your Da and me. You should not be bothered about such things."

"Mary Kate, tell me. Tell them that you don't want to go. Tell us all that you don't want to leave Ireland" and the tears flowed down my cheeks.

But my tears were of no avail. My sister's fate was, in reality, settled. She did want to go to America and had already made plans with my bother Tom to travel to Chicago and stay with him. And so, two months later, my father, mother and brother Mick and I drove the horse and cart into Castlerea to the train station to put my sister on the train, bound for Dublin and ultimately to New York. She would be met at Ellis Island by the sister of our neighbor, Mrs Hanley. From there, she would be put on a train for Chicago where she would live on Emerald Avenue with our eldest brother Tom.

I did not want my sister to leave. I cried all the way into Castlerea. I continued to give reasons why she should stay, but they fell on deaf ears.

At the train station in Castlerea, Mary Kate hugged me and told me not to worry. She assured me she would be fine, that she would write often and, in a couple of days, I'd have forgotten her completely. Well, I knew that was not true!

Mary Kate was a tall girl, slim. She had black hair and dark brown eyes. She wore a blue floral printed dress with a white lace collar made by our mother. On her head was a matching blue hat that had been our mother's, now covered with the same fabric as the dress. Mary Kate looked beautiful. She looked grown up and yet she looked so young to be setting off on a venture that would take her across the world. She had twenty-five American dollars in her purse that my father had exchanged from pounds at the bank in Dublin two weeks earlier.

I knew I would not ever see my beloved sister again. My mother knew she would not ever see her firstborn child again. My father also knew that Mary Kate would not be back to our lovely farm in Ireland. But we all knew this was for the best. The future of Ireland was questionable and it would survive only with the help of our families in America. And so, my sister left and we returned home to Creggs to carry on with our lives.

Ten years later, I joined her.

ED

Christie Smart

His name was Ed.
He was covered in art.
"This will hurt," he said.
I was scared from the start.

He was covered in art.
His eyes were so stern.
I was scared from the start.
He made my skin burn.

His eyes were so stern,
As he tattooed my hip.
He made my skin burn.
I cringed, bit my lip.

As he tattooed my hip,
I was filled with desire.
I cringed, bit my lip.
His talent I admired.

I was filled with desire,
his fingers touched my skin.
His talent I admired.
Wanting him was sin.

His fingers touched my skin,
I was overcome with a chill.
Wanting him was sin.
Watching him was thrill.

I was overcome with chill.
He said, "You're doing fine."
Watching him was thrill.
I kept wishing he were mine.

He said, "You're doing fine."
The pain caused me to shake.
I kept wishing he were mine.
My stomach began to ache.

The pain caused me to shake.
It was almost over.
My stomach began to ache.
"It takes 2 weeks to recover."

It was almost over.
He was finally finished.
It takes 2 week to recover.
The pain has finally diminished.

He was finally finished.
His first words were so grim.
The pain finally diminished.
I'll never, ever, forget him.

His first words were so grim.
"This will hurt," he said.
I'll never, ever, forget him.
His name was Ed.

IN MEMORIAM

Ted Thompson

Half a league
half a league
half a league
of easy sentimentality
unmatched
until the advent
of Hallmark
was the poetry of
Alfred
(Good Lord!)
Tennyson
who spent
too little time
in the bar
and far
too much time
contemplating crossing it.

Wordeater is the biannual literary/arts magazine of Joliet Junior College.

It accepts submissions from current and former students and faculty.

It is looking for original creative work of any kind, including poetry, plays, short fiction, translations, personal or literary essays, interviews, autobiographical prose, photography, and art.

Please submit work to W. Yarrow (English/Foreigh Language Department, mail-box C-1050 or in WORD via e-mail to byarrow@jjc.edu)). Put your name, address, and telephone number on an envelope or separate cover, but not on the work itself. Only artwork/photography will be returned. Please include a SASE.

The John Stobart Award for Poetry
1st Place: Gina Knight for her poem "Beatnik"
2nd Place: Christie Smart for her poem "Ed"

The John Stobart Award for Prose
1st Place: Suzanne Alton for her story "The Mexican Opals"
2nd Place: Amy Outland for her story "Untitled"

The John Stobart Award for Visual Arts
1st Place: Adam Farcus for front cover
2nd Place: Adam Farcus for "Compounding Idea"

1st and 2nd place monetary awards for prose, poetry, and artwork are given for student work judged the best in the current issue by an outside judge.

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Ted Thompson

Design and Layout
Jo Stworzyjanek

*John Stobart was the founder and guiding light of **Wordeater**. As faculty sponsor, he shepherded it through 106 issues. He retired from Joliet Junior College's English/Foreign Language Department in 1999.

Wørdsæ#ke ---------- Ø

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sevensevenfour0****

Death before life begins.
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I cA n't fighttt the feelings of this <—>>depression,
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beccomes the () source of all my Aggression--M¥ ⁂

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